



UN tribunal approves indictments of four Khmer Rouge leaders January 13, 2011

The United Nations-backed war crimes tribunal in Cambodia says it has confirmed indictments against the four top-ranking survivors of the murderous Khmer Rouge regime, clearing the way for trials to begin later this year.

A spokesman announced the decision of the pre-trial chamber on Thursday, saying the four will remain in detention until the trials begin, likely before July. The accused include “Brother Number Two” Nuon Chea, who ranked second only to the late Pol Pot. The others are former foreign minister Ieng Sary, his wife and ex-social affairs minister Ieng Thirith and former head of state Khieu Samphan. They will be tried on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, as well as related crimes under Cambodian law. Along with “First Brother” Pol Pot, the four presided over a government that saw the deaths of as many as two million people from starvation, overwork and executions between 1975 and 1979.

The tribunal’s first trial concluded in July with the conviction of former chief Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch, who ran the Tuol Sleng prison where an estimated 15,000 people died. Both Duch and the prosecutors are appealing his sentence, which could see him released from prison after 19 years. It remains uncertain whether there will be any further indictment after the trials of the current defendants, who range in age from 78 to 84. Prime Minister Hun Sen, who was himself a mid-level Khmer Rouge member, has warned that further prosecutions could spark a civil war.